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ABSTRACT

Comprehensive educational choice, implemented by a voucher system, would improve the quality of education of Chicago's elementary and secondary students and empower parents to choose the public or private school that would best serve their children's special needs. Enrollment in the Chicago Public Schools has decreased by 29 percent since 1971, partially attributable to a decline in public confidence in governmental institutions. A radical reform of public education is required to combat the following youth problems: (1) poverty; (2) unemployment; (3) dropping out; (4) juvenile crime; (5) alcohol and drug abuse; and (6) early parenthood. Educational choice would allow parents who were displeased with their child's public school to select another public school, remove the financial disadvantage of choosing a private school, and give all parents the opportunity of choosing the public or private school that best meets their child's individual needs. The following recommendations are suggested: (1) a system of educational choice should be expanded throughout the Chicago Public Schools; (2) the current state system of funding should be replaced with a voucher system that is paid directly to parents; (3) the Illinois General Assembly should establish an adequate fund to support the voucher system; and (4) the Illinois State Board of Education should be responsible for supervising the system and designating schools eligible to receive vouchers on the basis of curriculum, physical facilities, teacher qualifications, and racial integration. Parent choice would act as a catalyst to meaningful school reform and provide the optimum in educational opportunities regardless of place of residence or economic status. (FMW)

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Educational Choice: A Catalyst for School Reform

A Report of the

TASK FORCE ON EDUCATION

of the

City Club of Chicago

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August, 1989

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EDUCATIONAL CHOICE: A CATALYST FOR SCHOOL REFORM

A Report of the

Task Force on Education

of the

City Club of Chicago

Prepared by
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I. Introduction: The City Club's Agenda

At the present time, Chicago is witnessing an impressive and hopeful movement to reform its faltering public school system. A sweeping new school reform law has been passed by the state legislature. A new school board has been appointed by the Mayor. Significant new powers have been delegated to local school councils made up of parents, teachers, community leaders and the school principal. New funds will be forthcoming to the public schools as a result of the state income tax increase. The involvement of Chicago business and civic leaders in the cause of school reform is unprecedented.

All of this is praiseworthy. Hopes are high that the new reforms will work and that there will be a significant improvement in the public schools. The very future of the city is at stake. Unless Chicago can improve its public schools so that earning a high school diploma and achieving national standards in literacy and basic skills become the norm rather than the exception for Chicago public school students, the city's economy, tax base and quality of life will be gravely threatened.

We join in the support for school reform. We are also aware, however, that according to the Illinois State Constitution (Article X, Section 1.), "each citizen of the State of Illinois has a right to an opportunity to obtain an education sufficient for the development of the individual's capability." To achieve this worthy goal, however, we are convinced that more reform is needed. Our experience and research have persuaded us that to make school reform truly effective, more power and accountability must be given to parents, the primary educators of the students.

Underemphasized in Chicago's school reform agenda is Educational Choice, the right and power of parents to choose the school which they judge to be the best for their children. With Educational Choice, the system will have incentives to reward success and discourage failure. Our proposal calls for a comprehensive plan to truly guarantee the opportunity for a good education for all children. In anticipation of the important changes to be heralded by the implementation of school reform, this report is designed to advance public debate and legislative action on education policy.

Comprehensive Educational Choice, implemented by a voucher system, will not destroy the public schools but save them by creating conditions where all qualified schools, public and private, will enter into a healthy competition to win the confidence of parents and students.

The hour is late. The lives of thousands of innocent children and the future of the city are at stake. Educational choice will be good for parents, good for students, good for schools and good for Chicago.

Thomas J. Corcoran and
Carmen V. Speranza
Co-Chairs
Task Force on Education
City Club of Chicago

August, 1989

II. Choice: A Catalyst for School Reform

In the 1960s and 1970s the overriding educational issue--both nationally and locally--was racial desegregation of the nation's schools. In the 1980s, efforts to reform local public school systems again dominated the educational agenda, particularly in Chicago. It was in 1983, for example, that the National Commission on Excellence in Education issued its now famous report, A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform. (In fewer than five years more than twelve million copies were distributed.) The report's grim finding on the condition of the nation's public schools convulsed the educational establishment with doomsday conclusions such as these:

> Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science and technological innovation is being overtaken. . . . the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our future as a nation and a people.

At the close of this decade, to everyone's dismay, the various reform programs of the 1980s had failed to deliver improved education in urban public school systems, but particularly to children in the inner city.

"In 1988, the movement to restructure American schools came to a virtual standstill," wrote education writer Fred M. Hechinger's in the N.Y. Times' year-end assessment of U.S. public education (12/21/88). Hechinger offered this explanation:

> Those who closely monitored education this year say the epitaph for 1988 could be: Rich in rhetoric but poor in reform. Soviet *perestroika* and the "restructuring" of America's schools, they say, had in common some lofty plans for reform but little change for the consumer, which in American schools is the children.

In his end-of-the-year survey of various efforts at education reform, published in the N.Y.Times (1/1/89), Albert Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO), noted:

> A quick review of the events surrounding education reform in 1988 suggests that there is less there than meets the eye. Many of the stories generated lots of heat, but there was very little light shed on the real problems facing schools. . . . it's tempting to say that education reform came to a screaming halt in1988. . . .
>
> With so many pressing questions at hand, it's time to put aside the bullhorns, the testing manias and the high-blown promises of those who would take the public out of public education. The best resolution we could make for schools in '89 is this: less heat and more enlightenment.

Also putting the national situation in perspective was Rudy Perpich, Governor of Minnesota and the 1988-89 chair of the Education Commission of the States. Calling for "educational excellence for all," Governor Perpich noted:

> As many as one-third of the nation's 40 million school-aged children are at risk of either failing, dropping out or falling victim to crime, drugs, teenage pregnancy or chronic unemployment. What is even more troubling is that, despite the wave of education reform that is sweeping the country, the evidence suggests that the gap between the educational "haves "and the "have-nots" is widening.
>
> As Americans, we must come to grips with the fact that our present educational practices are

contributing to the creation of a permanent underclass in our society.

Our goal must be no less than equal access to educational excellence for *all* our children.

A basic component of school reform is expanding the opportunities and decision-making abilities of students, parents and teachers. This will make our educational system more flexible and responsive to the individual needs of our students.

Students who are at risk of dropping out of school don't need a lecture--they need an alternative.

The thrust of the growing movement for educational reform is not the "privatization" of public education. Public schools would, of course, continue to play their historic educational roles. What is once again being challenged is the inequity of the quasi-monopoly status conferred upon the officialdom of local public school districts. What is being questioned is the unexpressed assumption that public schools are the only American way to educate children. More civic leaders now than ever are now convinced that the public good is best be served by educational pluralism, a mixture of public and private schools for the nation's children.

As these leaders see it, the competition is not primarily between public and private schools, but between good schools and inferior ones; between successful learning and ineffective schooling; between schools that graduate teen-agers with character and those that do not; between education and ignorance.

What slows the movement for public school reform is (1) the sharply divergent view of educational reality--between that of the educational establishment and that of the general public; and (2) disagreement about what needs to be done to improve local education. The National Center for Educational Information, in a nationwide survey late in 1987, found that 87 percent of the public school superintendents contended that schools in their communities had improved in the last five years. By contrast, a Gallup poll a few months earlier had reported that only 25 percent of the citizenry shared the superintendents' views. Furthermore, a N.Y. Times/CBS nationwide poll late in 1988 found that 39 percent of those surveyed thought that education had worsened since 1980; only 21 percent thought it had improved.

What is emerging as the pre-eminent school question for the 1990's is the expanding of parental choice in education--especially for children from low-income families. The reason for the surge of interest in parental choice has been the inability of the U.S. educational establishment to demonstrate meaningful progress in public school reform. Many educational, business, government and civic leaders view the drive for greater parental choice in education as the most significant and promising movement in American education today. These leaders are convinced that choice, while not a panacea, empowers parents and challenges teachers and principals to improve their schools. The conviction that parental choice influences the educational quality of local schools is becoming more widely accepted by state lawmaking bodies.

As its proponents view it, parental choice is another name for parental responsibility.

III. Parental Clamor for School Choice

Signaling the arrival of the new debate was a "White House Workshop on Choice in Education" convened early in 1989. The workshop featured a major address by President George Bush (then vice-president), who had earlier promised that he would be an "education president." The workshop focused on how the movement for educational choice had become an integral part of national efforts to upgrade public education. The workshop's program featured ways to augment parental choice in local public school systems nationwide. Other forms of choice, such as educational vouchers and tax rebates that involved both private and public schools, were given only minor attention.

In a major address to the White House Workshop, Tommy G. Thompson, Governor of Wisconsin, proposed that:

> Parental choice would give low-income children the same advantage as other children.The studies prove it! Not every parent can afford to buy a house in the neighborhood where the best schools are located or send their child to a private school. . . . You and I are fortunate. If our local public school is not doing an adequate job of educating our children, most of us can afford to send them to private schools. Parents with limited incomes want the same for their children as you and I want for ours.
>
> Parental choice will provide an equal starting line of opportunity for all our students. . . . Parents should have a right to decide where their children will go to school. It's as simple as that. Parents are responsible for overseeing their childrens' education and they, not state government and school boards, should decide what influences dominate the prime hours of their childrens' day.
>
> Last year [1988]. . . . I proposed a pilot program which would have allowed low-income parents to send their children to any public, private, or parochial school in Milwaukee County. The plan was endorsed statewide by parents, minority community leaders and educators. But, despite that support, we ran into some powerful opposition. The opponents argued that we were trying to break up the Milwaukee public schools. That certainly was not our objective. Rather, it was to widen the educational opportunities for low-income students, and improve the overall quality of their education. And, as many of you know, the legislation unfortunately went nowhere.

The swelling demand for parental choice, nationally and locally, had already been announced widely. A survey (October 1988) published by the Office of Educational Equity of the Massachusetts Department of Education, "Why Parents in Five Nations Choose Schools" (Scotland, Belgium, Netherlands, France and the U.S.A.), found that:

> Parent choice of schools is a hotly contested area of educational policy in virtually every Western democracy. . . . The United States is no exception. . . . In these wide-ranging discussions, one question arises again and again: do parents--especially poor parents--really want school choice, or do they (as one urban administrator insisted) merely want a good-quality school as near to home as possible?
>
> It seems clear that many Americans are interested in being able to choose the school their children will attend, and have some fairly definite ideas about what such a school should offer. All parents do not agree on what is to be desired for the schooling of their children, and this offers opportunity to develop more purposeful diversity than is now generally available.

In a nationwide overview of school choice, the N.Y. Times (7/11/88) reported:

> The push towards more choice, which began as a way to achieve more balance in individual schools, has expanded into a broad educational movement embraced by an unusual coalition of liberals and conservatives. At least 15 states have increased parental options. . . . letting parents pick the public school their children will attend.

Newsweek magazine (9/19/88) noted:

> A reform era is dawning in public education: parents are being given a choice in the education their children receive.

And Business Week (9/19/88) observed that:

> there is growing support for the idea of parental choice to foster competition, accountability, and parental involvement. . . . Poor kids, claims the Heritage Foundation. . . would benefit most, since wealthier families choose schools by moving to communities with good ones.

What the national media had finally discovered was a trend previously known only to poll takers conducting nationwide surveys:

• A Gallup Poll done in 1987 for Phi Delta Kappa (a professional association whose members are largely public school educators), found impressive support for parental choice: 71 percent of the general public surveyed thought that parents "should have the right to choose the local schools their children attend"; 77 percent of the non-whites polled agreed that parents should have the right to choose. These are healthy majorities. Forty-four percent favored a voucher system allowing parents to send their children to any public or private school of their choosing. Another 41 percent opposed such a plan, while 15 percent had no opinion. Back in 1971, however, only 38 percent had favored the voucher system, while 44 percent were opposed and 18 percent expressed no opinion.

• A 1988 Harris poll for Children magazine found that if public school parents had the means, 51 percent would put their children in private schools; 45 percent would keep them in public schools.

• A 1988 survey conducted nationwide by the Gallup Organization for the Times Mirror Company of Los Angeles asked voters whether "they would be likely to vote for a presidential candidate who favors giving parents vouchers they can use to pay for their kids' education at public or private schools." Most voters said yes: 49 percent answered "more likely," with 27 percent "less likely." Voters classified as "partisan/poor Democrats" supported the idea by an even larger margin: 62 percent replied "more likely."

• A public opinion survey sponsored by the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance, "Chicagoans View Their Public School," found in 1985 that among parents with children attending the city's public schools:

> Fully 69 percent said that they would enroll their children in private schools, if they could afford it, primarily because they perceive non-public schools provide a better education in which students get more attention than in public schools. Thus, the public schools are "schools of choice" for only 31 percent of the families utilizing them. . . . Wealth is clearly a factor in family choice about school enrollment. . . . Affluent parents (incomes over $40,000) choose private schools over public by a two-to-one margin.

• In Chicago, parents' ability to choose the school they think best for their children is constrained only by their low incomes and/or opportunity. When the new Corporate/Community School in Chicago announced that it would be opening its doors in 1988, parents of more than 2,000 children applied for one of the 150 tuition-free scholarships. Since applications for the new private elementary school were accepted only from residents of the

North Lawndale community, whose population is predominantly black and poor, the great number of applicants supplied further evidence that low-income households overwhelmingly favor parental choice and, when given the opportunity, exercise it. In their ability to recognize a better school, low-income parents are no different than middle-class ones.

IV. Enabling the Poor and Minorities to Choose

In opinion surveys over the last decade, the poor and minorities have overwhelmingly backed parental choice. These two groups have, without exception, endorsed any government initiative which would undergird their ability to choose among public and private schools. They do not want their choices, however, limited by poverty or race. They have consistently been the biggest boosters of tax credits, educational vouchers and other programs that make parental choice a reality. Their views were articulated by Denis P. Doyle, the co-author of Winning the Brain Race: A Bold Plan to Make Our Schools Competitive. Now a senior research fellow at the Hudson Institute in Indianapolis, Doyle wrote in an Institute publication in 1987 about what he called "the most important education debate of the decade, reconciling equity and excellence":

> Real choice cannot flourish when one group of families receives access to public resources and another does not. . . .
>
> Most government policies are designed to permit individuals to forge their own relationship with institutions of choice, religious or public. Why not also in elementary and secondary education?. .
>
> Whether it is vouchers, tax credits, or by-pass, the nation must remember. . . that education is always and ultimately a private matter between parents and children. The role of the government is to help make sure that poverty does not prevent children from learning, from developing to their fullest potential. Nor should it become a reason for families to lose their religious freedom, to be unable to educate their children to respect the values the family holds central.

Choice becomes an empty wish, if it only tantalizes a parent with an unobtainable alternative. A bona fide option, however, demands having not only the determination but also the wherewithal to take advantage of an opportunity for choice. Writing in Point of View, a publication of the Congressional Black Caucus (Fall 1977), Robert L. Woodson pointed out:

> We know that low-income people and many minorities want more choice. We know that those who can afford it have a choice. We know that students do better in school, especially poor and minority students, under choice plans. We know that well-assigned choice programs assist with desegregation.
>
> One recent survey identified 2,500 alternative education programs. Furthermore, hundreds of low-cost, neighborhood- based independent schools have established themselves as viable alternatives to traditional public education for inner-city blacks and other minorities. A voucher in any amount would assist those efforts as well as the parents who are making tremendous sacrifices to send their children to these schools.

Woodson, who is president of the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise headquartered in Washington, D.C., argued again in 1989 that:

> Educational choice should be a fundamental right of all parents. Low-income parents want exactly what more affluent parents want--good education for their children to help them become independent and productive citizens.
>
> The affluent already have many choices because they can pay tuition or choose where they want to

live and where they want to send their children to school. So, when we talk about enhancing choice, we are simply talking about giving working class and poor people the same opportunity to choose schools and services for their children.

In his own way, Woodson echoed the words spoken two decades earlier about black youth by Martin Luth Jr.:

> The discrimination of the future will not be based on race, but on education. Those without education will find no place in our highly sophisticated, technical society.

In an address on "Restructuring American Education Through Choice," Lauro F. Cavazos, the U.S. Secre Education, reminded the Education Press Association in Washington, D.C. (5/19/89) that:

> The failings of our school system today affect all children, but none more severely than America's minority and disadvantaged young people. You are well aware of the tragic situation in some of our inner-city and rural schools where it is common for half or more of the minority students to drop out. . . and for those who do graduate to go out into the world unprepared for college and the workplace.
>
> It's not enough to deplore the situation or to blame it on a supposed lack of money. We already spend more on our students than any major industrialized country in the world. . . . I believe we can no longer patch, adjust, tinker and complain. It is time to act. The solution is restructuring and the catalyst is choice.
>
> No child, no matter his or her circumstances, should be compelled to attend a failing school, or one that does not meet their academic needs. Choice offers parents, students and teachers the opportunity to select the better schools. . . . I say, enable all Americans to make choices in education. Furthermore, armed with the power of choice, parents can force inferior schools to upgrade or close. No citizen should attend a second rate school in the United States of America.
>
> President Bush and I are determined to use the power of choice to help restructure American education.

Underpinning these significant developments in Washington, D.C. is the mushrooming realization American public--from coast to coast-- that parents, not the government or church, are the child's primary te The leading role of religious, governmental or other institutions is to help parents carry out their responsibil children. Thus the family is being seen more and more as the basic educational unit; other educational enti viewed as secondary and supportive.

Joan Davis Ratteray, President of the Institute for Independent Education in Washington, D.C., testified i before a Presidential Commission that:

> our legacy of liberty in America includes the ability to exercise meaningful choice. We forget that we are free by being in the Union but not absorbed by it. It is uniqueness among different groups that gives the American mosaic its strength. We forget that it is a mosaic and not a "melting pot," and we often try to obliterate our uniqueness. . . .
>
> As an African-American, I recognize that government support has been the means by which we and other minority groups have dismantled many legal barriers that have excluded us from the mainstream. In many respects, the federal government has been a "savior." But I also recognize that when government gives, it also takes away.One of the things it has taken away is choice. . . . Most Black Americans have only one "choice": inner city schools that have become the dregs of

the nation's education system.

> The Institute for Independent Education. . . found hundreds of independent neighborhood academic schools meeting the needs of minority-group youth from the upper, middle and low-income families all across the nation. . . . During my tour of forty such independent schools across America, I did not learn about absenteeism, a lack of motivation to learn, or discipline problems. I did not hear about drug traffic in the hallways or see uniformed policemen. What I found. . . [were schools] proud of the results they have achieved, turning around children that others have labeled "underachieving." These independent schools represent the power of parental choice. They exist because quality education is not just a luxury for the well-do-do. They challenge public schools to be competitive without the infusion of larger and larger sums of tax dollars. They are islands of excellence, and some of them are models for innovation in public institutions.

In February 1989, to no one's surprise, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in Washington, D.C. voted to make as one of its priorities for 1989-1990: "Parental Choice and Equal Opportunity in America."

V. Why Business Leaders Demand Educational Choice

Key to the growing demand for parental choice is the unprecedented demand by business leaders for reform of public education. For example, consider this business leader's assessment of the nation's public schools. David P. Kearns, chairman of Xerox Corporation, together with Denis P. Doyle, was the author of the educational best-seller, Winning the Brain Race*, concluded:

> By any measure, today's educational system is a failed monopoly. That it is failing large numbers of students is beyond dispute--one quarter do not graduate and another quarter are so poorly prepared academically that they are not ready for work or postsecondary education. But does that unacceptably high rate of failure have anything to do with the schools' monopoly position? We are convinced it does. The monopolist is free to ignore the legitimate needs and interests of both the consumer and the worker, a picture that describes the reality of today's educational system. Teachers and students are the losers. . . . In the parlance of business, that would be known as "conspiracy in restraint of trade". . . .
>
> Providing choice means allowing schools to compete with one another for the most valuable of assets: students. . . .
>
> But choice in and of itself is an empty concept unless there are real decisions to be made among alternate providers. Henry Ford, for example, is reputed to have said that customers could have any color Ford they wanted so long as it was black. A real education choice system can be effective only if it leads to significant diversity among schools, and if it's backed by the capacity of parents, students and teachers to make real decisions.

In 1988, Fortune magazine sponsored a two-day "summit" dedicated to "saving" the nation's public schools. Fortune's managing editor summed up the meeting's purpose:

> Let's stop lamenting the crisis in America's schools and start doing something about it. With that in mind, Fortune convened a conference of 106 leaders in business, government, labor and academe to discuss exactly what business can--and should--do. The drive to improve education is uniting corporate chiefs to a degree that no social issue has before. . . . Answers don't come easily, but Fortune can at least provide insight and advice.

One such insight from that meeting was this recommendation: "Give parents a choice."

In no other large U.S. city has business leadership become so actively involved in improving elementary and secondary education as in Chicago. Corporate executives now give their time, staff and dollars to help bolster programs for the city's youngsters to acquire a good education. In the early 1980s they led the campaign to make the city's public school administration more fiscally responsible. In 1988 they played key roles in supporting legislation in Springfield to reform the Chicago public school system. By their endorsement of magnet schools, nearly a decade ago, they supported steps taken to extend parental choice within the Chicago public school system. Many companies have "adopted" local public schools.

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* Lee Iacocca, Board Chairman of the Chrysler Corporation, praised the book, saying: "No issue is more important than education. . . and this book will contribute significantly to improving the educational system in our country."

To push for the implementation of the Illinois school reform bill, Chicago's business leaders in 1989 formed Leadership for Quality Education, an organization with a staff and office. A joint initiative of Chicago United and the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago, LQE will assist the Chicago Public Schools in such areas as: reducing ths size of the CPS' administrative bureaucracy, training nearly 600 principals and helping find the resources needed to achieve school reform. Joseph D. Reed, formerly an AT&T regional vice-president, is LQE's new full-time president.

Businessmen bring to the public discussion of school reform a more realistic approach than do those educational professionals who continually excuse their educational deficiencies as a shortage of money. Business leaders resent being told that the test of their determination and sincerity is their willingness to increase governmental spending. For they are skeptical about the claim that additional dollars, whether local, state or federal, will inevitably lead to better school performance. It was a consortium of Chicago business leaders who informed the Chicago Board of Education that (1) the ratio of administrators to students in Chicago public schools was 1 to 143, while in Chicago's Catholic schools the ratio was 1 to 6250; and (2) the State of New York spends more per pupil than any other state in the nation but has yet to produce a public school system in its principal city which can be emulated around the country.

To their credit, most leaders of commerce and industry have not been bamboozled by what has been called the "fallacy of the 14-egg omelet." It insists that the solution to the ills which beset urban public school systems is an injection of additional dollars. Business leaders are astute enough to realize that an inedible 12-egg omelet served up by a bad chef with a daffy recipe and no culinary skill cannot be transformed into something edible by adding two more eggs to the mixing bowl.

While the city's top CEOs are more concerned than ever about the state of Chicago's public schools, their interest goes beyond public schools. Their concern encompasses the future of private schools as well. They are unwilling to put, as it were, all of their eggs in one basket. These corporate leaders have come to appreciate how mighty has been the contribution of private inner-city schools to Chicago's survival and revival. How Catholic, Lutheran and other private schools remained in the inner city to serve their neighorhood's newcomers, regardless of race, religion or economic status, as their predecessors migrated to the suburbs. How damaging their disappearance would be to the future of the city.

A feature article, "Of more than parochial interest," in the U.S. News and World Report (5/22/89), highlighted the valuable educational partnership of Catholic parish schools in Chicago's inner city neighborhoods:

> The hard times for Catholic schools are of more than parochial interest. 'The education system is diminished every time a Catholic school is closed," argues Ernest Boyer, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, "because it shuts off another option for good education in the inner city."

In what ways have Chicago's business leaders tried to enhance parental choice with regard to private schools? They have provided scholarships and tuition grants. They have taken initiatives of their own to ensure the well-being and survival of such schools. They have volunteered their time and expertise, for example, to private schools serving children from low-income families, such as those living in giant public housing projects. They have publicly acknowledged the continuing contribution of private schools to the city's well-being. Here are some examples:

• Corporate financial aid to private elementary and secondary schools is growing. Foundations and corporations are slowly coming to regard their gifts to private elementary and secondary schools as important as their regular contributions to the Art Institute, Lyric Opera, United Way, Field Museum or the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. The Wall Street Journal (3/22/84) reported:

> Corporations and their foundations, already significant in college fund raising, increasingly give to

> secondary schools (and sometimes even elementary schools) as well. An estimated 400 corporations, twice as many as in 1970, now match employee gifts to secondary schools. The Kimberley-Clark Foundation channeled 26 percent of its educational matching gifts last year to such schools. As of last month, any school qualifies for matching gifts from Pittway Corp., an Illinois manufacturer.

Hayden W. Smith of the Council for Aid to Education estimates that corporate support for pre-college education reached $200 million in 1988. The Council for the Advancement and Support of Education lists more than 500 corporations which match employee gifts to private, secondary schools, and a lesser number to elementary institutions. Nearly 100 Illinois corporations, which once matched employee gifts only to colleges, have extended their policy to match such donations to elementary and secondary schools. The number of Illinois corporations who make such matching gifts grows in number each year.

• Chicago United, which is the city's leading multi-racial coalition of Chicago business leaders, has actively worked on public school reform since 1981. It adopted a report in 1988 which encouraged:

> member companies to contribute financial support to successful, inner-city private and elementary secondary schools. These schools perform an important public service by providing a much-needed, successful educational alternative in many low-income neighborhoods. Their graduates are an important source of the city's trained work force. . . .
>
> These schools also serve as an anchor of stability for many striving, low-income and working-class, tax-paying families who might otherwise leave the city. Many of these schools, however, face a serious financial crisis because the tuition fees which their students' families can afford are insufficient to cover operating costs.

• In 1988 a Corporate/Community School was opened in Chicago's North Lawndale neighborhood with 150 students, mostly black and Hispanic. The pupils for this tuition-free elementary school were randomly selected. A private school, it was financed by 50 Chicago companies who pooled their resources under the leadership of Joseph Kellman, president of Globe Glass and Mirror Co. Help also came from the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago which donated the school building. The school's budget for the first three years adds up to $3 million. Eventually, the school will serve 300 pupils from pre-school through the 8th grade. Its purpose is to become a model for public schools by demonstrating that inner city kids can learn as well as suburban children can, if given the right educational environment. Very dramatically and effectively, the Corporate/Community School is offering low-income parents of the North Lawndale community more than one educational option.

• To ensure the survival of 135 inner-city Catholic schools, top business executives joined together in 1986 to support the Big Shoulders Fund. They took their cue from Carl Sandburg's memorable phrase in his poem about Chicago, "City of the Big Shoulders." In three years the Big Shoulders Fund raised nearly $19 million to sustain these schools, which enroll 42,000 students of whom 40 percent are non-Catholics and 80 percent are black, Hispanic or Asian. A large number of these students come from families in poverty, many of whom live in public housing projects. These 135 Chicago schools represent the largest private system of inner city education anywhere in the United States. Craig F. Kennedy, president of the Chicago-based Joyce Foundation, explained why his foundation made a grant of $300,000 to the Big Shoulders Fund:

> There is some concern that we're detracting from our commitment to a strong and effective public school system. But you can go into the toughest neighborhoods in Chicago, step inside a Catholic school, and you'll see that kids are learning.

The Joyce Foundation grant was its first to Catholic schools, and was considerably less than what the foundation gave to public schools.

VI. U.S. Constitution's Support of Educational Pluralism

Strengthening parental choice in education should not, it would seem, be a controversial issue. The common-law tradition in the United States, even before the U.S. Constitution of 1787, had steadfastly upheld the right of a parent to be the child's principal teacher. That inalienable right, however, has not always been respected by state legislators. Why? In 1971 Professor Elwyn A. Smith of Temple University suggested that:

> the vehemence of the disputes that swirl around public education are largely to be explained. . . by the suggestion that the American public school system is the nation's equivalent to the European established church.

When the U.S. public school movement reached its ascendancy during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it displaced the private school as the preponderant educational institution. As this educational shift was taking place, many state legislatures, including Illinois', passed laws to curb private schools in order to guarantee the public school a virtual monopoly over elementary and secondary education.

The legislative harrassment of private schools continued until 1925. In that year the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously overturned the "Oregon Compulsory Education Act," which, with the support of the Ku Klux Klan, had been approved in a statewide referendum in 1922. That law required parents to send their children between the ages of eight to sixteen years to the local public school. In its landmark decision rejecting an educational monopoly by public schools, the U.S. Supreme Court held that the Oregon law:

> unreasonably interferes with the liberty of parents and guardians to direct the upbringing and education of children under their control. . . .
>
> The fundamental theory of liberty upon which all governments in this Union repose excludes any general power of the State to standardize its children by forcing them to accept instruction from public teachers only. The child is not the mere creature of the State; those who nurture him and direct his destiny have the right, coupled with the high duty, to recognize and prepare him for additional obligations.

Two decades, later the United Nations, in its 1948 Declaration of Human Rights, also came to the defense of the parents' right of first choice:

> Everyone has a right to education. . . and parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Even though protected by the U.S. Constitution, the basic right of parents to choose their child's education has yet to be realized in the nation's fifty states. For example, a bi-partisan bill in support of parental choice, through tax credits for tuition payments to private schools, almost passed the U.S. Congress in the early 1970s. The bill's co-sponsor, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York, attributed the defeat of his bill to those who distrusted educational pluralism and instead favored the *de facto* monopoly enjoyed by the public school bureaucracies. Moynihan noted that his opponents hid their dislike of educational pluralism behind real or imagined constitutional questions:

> if our experience with tuition tax credits. . . taught us anything, it is that those who prefer not to help [private] schools are wont to interpose the Constitution between any specific proposal and the issue of social policy that it properly addresses. It is not that we wish to avoid the constitutional question; to the contrary, we welcome the court test, and have asked only that we be given our day in court. But the constitutional question cannot be resolved until appropriate enabling legislation is passed, and legislation will not be passed until our propositon is dealt with in the domain of public policy.

One who shared Moynihan's view was the U.S. Vice-President, Hubert H. Humphrey. Lauding Humphrey as a stouthearted promoter of parental choice in education, Moynihan said:

> Our beloved former colleague, the late Senator Hubert Humphrey, who was the Democratic candidate for the Presidency in 1968, stated: "I favor the creation of a tax system where parents would be able to receive a tax credit when their children attend approved private schools."

Paradoxically, the uncompromising foes of parental choice have been the chief lobbyists for the educational establishment: the National Education Association, the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, and the American Federation of Teachers. These organizations insist on protecting the public school's *de facto* monopoly. They contend that (1) choice will increase segregation; (2) choice will destroy public education; and (3) poor and minority parents will not be able to make the decisions necessary to exercise choice well. In a working paper specially prepared for the 1989 White House Workshop on Choice in Education, the U.S. Office of Education singled out these three claims and rebutted them one by one and in detail, characterizing each of them as "myths" about choice.

Only in recent years have the NEA and the AFT modified their opposition slightly. They have reluctantly bowed to pressures from parents, governors, business leaders, mayors and other interested groups. How? By cautiously supporting the extension of choice within the public school system only--but with a laundry list of reservations.

As time goes by, the NEA's and the AFT's polemic against educational choice has become less effective and has even come to be regarded, in some quarters, as untrustworthy. Why? A new generation of public school administrators, educational scholars and government officials has fought back. They have used their personal experience with parental choice to confront the self-serving rhetoric of the nation's public school establishment. Their views have been expressed in educational journals, before national conferences, at public hearings and in a steady stream of books. Their latest success is a book, Public Schools by Choice: Opportunities for Parents, Students and Teachers (1989). It presents the views and experience of fifteen nationally known authorities in the field of education. and government. The book's editor is Joe Nathan, a leader in the fast-growing movement to expand educational choices and a senior fellow at the University of Minnesota's Institute of Urban Affairs.

Many supporters of greater choice in public schools are not averse to expanding parental choice to include private schools as well. Several years ago, in an article in the Phi Delta Kappan, Nathan countered the claim that making choices more available would destroy the public schools. He pointed to the experience of Vermont, Maine and Minnesota where parental choice includes both public and private schools. He wrote:

> Unfortunately, considerable misunderstanding exists about the impact of educational choices. Some critics argue that parents want basics, not options--as though the two are incompatible. Others insist that, if we expand choices to include private and parochial schools, we will destroy public education and produce a splintered, inequitable society. It's time to counter rhetoric with reality by carefully examining what is happening in those places where educational choices have been made available. . . .
>
> Since the 1890s, Vermont has permitted town boards to decide whether tax funds may be used to

> pay tuition at various nonsectarian private secondary schools and out-of-district public high schools. Ninety-five of the 246 towns in Vermont permit families to use funds in this manner . . . Vermont uses tax-financed tuitions most extensively, but other New England states have used this method of offering educational choices to parents and students. In more than 30 Maine towns, students have been allowed to attend any one of several public, private or parochial high schools, with the towns paying their tuitions. "We have never called them voucher plans, but they serve the same purpose," noted Richard Redmond, deputy commisisioner of education in Maine.
>
> Minnesota has also used its tax system--though in a somewhat different fashion--to support educational choices. . . . Minnesota has permitted state tax deductions for school expenses. . . [It has been] estimated that 60 percent of the people who use this deduction are sending their children to public schools. . . .

The U.S. Congress currently displays little interest in proposals to enhance parental choice in education. On the other hand, state legislators are preoccupied with devising ways to maximize parental choice. The state initiatives have generally centered on choice among public schools. Nonetheless, two states, Iowa and Minnesota, have taken an across-the-board approach to strengthen parental choice among both public and private schools. This was accomplished by giving parents a dollar credit or deduction on their state income tax.

- In Iowa taxpayers who itemize may claim a deduction up to $1,000 for the cost of each dependent's tuition and textbooks at any public or private school (kindergarten through twelve). Taxpayers who take the standard deduction may claim a tax credit of five percent of the first $1,000 spent for each dependent's tuition and textbooks.

- In Minnesota taxpayers who itemized on their federal income tax return may take a deduction of up to $650 for the cost of tuition, transportation, non-religious textbooks and other qualifying educational expenses for each child (kindergarten through grade six). The maximum deduction for a youngster (grades seven through 13) is $1,000. The dependents can be attending public or private schools in Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota or Wisconsin. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Mueller* v. *Allen* (1983) that Minnesota's law was constitutional.

VII. In Illinois: A Live Issue

Educational choice is a live issue in The State of Illinois. The Illinois State Board of Education since 1986 has been working on a policy with regard to educational choice. The purpose of the study is to produce:

> a policy on the issue of providing educational choice within the larger context of developing policies that define and provide support for equity and excellence in Illinois schools and districts.

The State Board's preliminary working papers have considered not only choice plans for public school districts but also voucher plans and tax credits which would apply to students in both private and public schools. Furthermore, as a result of Chicago school reform legislation enacted by the Illinois General Assembly in 1988, the State Board is also required:

> in consultation with the Chicago Board of Education and other interested school boards, to study and propose incentive programs for "open enrollment within school districts."

This task, mandated by the Illinois General Assembly, will be completed by the State Board by January 1, 1990 as part of its larger study of educational choice which was launched in 1986.

The Illinois State Board of Education, headquartered in Springfield, plays a major role in the development of educational policy for state schools. The State Board, for example, spearheads a broad-based coalition of school organizations, trade associations and community groups to lobby the Illinois legislature for an increase in the Illinois tax that would boost state aid to local school districts. As part of this political activity, the State Board has a government relations section which regularly convenes a "Large Lobby Group."

The State Superintendent of Education played a leading role in the organization of the widely acclaimed Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy, the state's premier example of parental choice in education. Situated in Aurora, the Academy is the nation's only three-year public residential high school for students gifted in mathematics and science. It accepts qualified Illinois youngsters who have completed the equivalent of the ninth grade. Fifty-seven percent of its 509 students come from the Chicago metropolitan area. Parents are required to pay a minimal fee of $650 a year for student-related activities. The per pupil cost of operating the school is $18,000 annually, compared to the average per pupil cost of $4,513 in all Illinois public schools.

The State Board of Education recognizes the Illinois Advisory Committee on Non-Public Schools. The Advisory Committee describes itself as:

> a coalition of Illinois elementary and secondary schools designed to promote the fundamental goal of education as set forth in the Illinois State Constitution (Article 10, Section 1), "Each citizen of the state of Illinois has a right to an opportunity to obtain an education sufficient for the development of the individual's capabilities."
>
> We affirm that the primary obligation for the education of the child belongs to parents. As formal education in our society generally occurs within the framework of a school, it remains the parents' right and obligation to select for the education of a child either a public or non-public school. When the selection of a school has been made, the State is obligated within legal parameters and without interference to assist parents with the school they have chosen.

Current members of the Illinois Advisory Committee are: Ad Hoc Committee for Illinois Home Education, Alternative Schools Network, Archdiocese of Chicago (Catholic), Associated Talmud Torahs of Chicago, Board of Jewish Education of Metropolitan Chicago, Christian Schools of Illinois, Diocese of Joliet (Catholic), Illinois Association of Christian Schools, Illinois Montessori Society, Independent Schools Association of Central States, Independent Schools of Greater Chicago, Lutheran Schools Missouri Synod, Seventh Day Adventist Illinois Conference, Seventh Day Adventist Lake Region Conference, and Solomon Schechter Day Schools.

There is little doubt, both in City Hall and in the State Capitol in Springfield, that a consensus prevails about extending parental choice more widely within the Chicago public school system. Such educational choice is increasingly being viewed as an important and necessary step on the long road to reform of Chicago's public schools.

A parental choice arrangement which would enhance parental capability to choose among both public and private schools has yet to garner a similar consensus and to overcome entrenched hostility. The desirablity of endowing parents with a real educational choice is still being debated among government officials, school administrators, legislators and civic leaders. An Educational Choice Act, House Bill 890, introduced in the Illinois General Assembly early in 1989 would have allowed Illinois parents to apply to the State Board of Education for a tiny annual voucher of $60--to be used at any public or private school of their choice. The vouchers would be financed from new educational dollars appropriated by the Illinois legislature.

Shortly thereafter, thirteen Illinois educational, civic, political action and religious organizations jointly announced their "strong opposition" to House Bill 890, claiming that:

> This Act could jeopardize funding of public education. . . . The constitutionality of the Act is not clear. It is fair to say that the Act is at least problematic from a constitutional perspective.

House Bill 890 was sponsored by State Representative Robert J. Bugielski, a Chicago Democrat. By a twelve-to-six vote, the bill was recommended favorably by the House Executive Committee. (Nine Democratic and three Republican legislators voted for the bill; five Republicans and one Democrat opposed it.) Subsequently the bill failed to muster enough votes for passage by the full House of Representatives.

The positive recommendation from the House Executive Committee in 1989 was not an accident. It pointed to the presence of a solid body of public opinion favoring some state action in order to strengthen parental choice. In Illinois there is growing public support for educational vouchers, tax credits, tax rebates, or tax deductions for parents so that they can afford to send their children to public or private schools of their choice. The following is a representative sampling of such endorsements by institutions and persons:

• Edwin S. Mills, Gary Rosenberg Professor of Real Estate and Finance at the J.L. Kellogg Graduate School of Management of Northwestern University, wrote (8/4/88):

> The public schools in Chicago and elsewhere have plenty of problems, but the need is for reform, not more money. The best way to encourage public schools to provide better education is to enable parents to send their children to the school that will best suit the children's needs. That can be accomplished with a voucher program, which was considered by the legislature this spring but was successfully opposed by people who benefit from the status quo.
>
> Under a voucher program, parents are given a voucher for each child. The voucher could be used to pay full tuition at any local public school, or the same amount at any other school.

• Donald Garner, Professor of Law, Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, wrote (4/4/88):

> The best way to break this cycle of inner-city ignorance and rebuild the American education system

is to cut off funding to the bad schools and increase funding to the good ones.

An excellent method of accomplishing this is the voucher system. Parents are given a state check or voucher that can be cashed at any state-approved school--private or public.

They can use these funds to place their child in an approved private school or another public school if their local public school isn't doing the job. Extra revenue would not be required, only the reallocation of current revenue. The voucher system would thereby give all kids the same chance and would open up schools heretofore effectively closed to the children of the poor and middle classes.

James S. Coleman, Professor of Sociology at the University of Chicago, looked at parental choice from the viewpoint of the public interest:

private school tuition. . . protects the public schools from competition by private schools. . . . and it protects most the worst public schools, those that would be depopulated by families' freedom to choose. . . . and it harms most those to whom the price of tuition or the choice of school by moving residence is the greatest barrier--that is, the low-income family that is least able to leave a bad school, and the black family that confronts the greater barriers to moving elsewhere. . . . In short, the tuition barrier to private schooling, as it exists now is almost certainly harmful to the public interest, and especially harmful to the interests of those least well-off.

• In an editorial (one of a series supporting educational vouchers), "Chicago schools need long-range plan," the Chicago Tribune concluded:

In the long term, the best way to reform Chicago's public schools is to switch to a voucher system. That would force changes in the two major, intractable barriers to reform: the bloated blob of the bureaucracy and the self-serving contract of the teachers' union.

If parents got an annual voucher to pay for a year of education in any public or private school they chose, they would have enormous, real power--far more than under the proposals for setting up smaller school districts or local school councils that the legislature is considering.

• The newsweekly, Crain's Chicago Business (3/16/87) voiced this opinion:

A competitive marketplace in education--backed by a voucher system for Chicago parents--would allow new ideas and techniques to rise to the top and survive or fail on their own merits.

In her column, "Force schools to make the choice grade," in the Chicago Sun-Times (7/11/89), Suzanne Fields chided the National Education Association for opposing parental choice in education and for defending "the public school status quo":

Look at it this way. If a student has the choice of a quality school across town or a shoddy school in his neighborhood, where do you think he'll want to go?

Choice sharpens competition and will expose the awful schools right out of existence. That's why it appeals to parents across a political spectrum.

Conservatives see choice as good business, introducing free market competition to an outmoded system. The neighborhood school now plays to a captive audience.

> Liberals see choice as a way to bring together children from different economic groups, offering fresh opportunities to families who live in low-income neighborhoods to attend schools in more affluent districts. In fact, several choice programs have desegregated schools, with free transportation and protection for a workable racial mix.

• The Chicago City Council approved a tax levy ordinance (10/17/85) with an amendment held to be non-binding on the Chicago Board of Education. That amendment read:

> There is hereby created a City wide educational voucher system. It is the intent of this City Council to create a competitive education market providing parents the freedom of choice to determine where and under what circumstances their children will be educated. Payment in the amount of tuition charged by a non-public school or $1,250.00, whichever is less, is hereby authorized for every student of the Chicago Public School system whose parent so chooses to exercise this option.

• In a non-partisan 1988 publication, We can Rescue Our Children: The Cure for Chicago's Schools crisis--With Lessons for the Rest of America, the book's authors, Herbert J. Walberg, Michael J. Bakalis, Joseph L. Bast and Steven Baer advocated:

> Under the Education Rebate Plan, everyone who finances the educational expense of a child attending a registered public or nonpublic school in Chicago would qualify for a rebate [from the Cook County Treasurer's office]. Because more than one person could contribute toward the educational expenses of each child, the total value of rebates issued on behalf of one child could exceed the $1,000 limit placed on each rebate. This policy has a number of advantages: it is fair, since anyone--not only the parents--who contributes toward the education of a child should not have to pay again through taxes. It also benefits the poor, since those who are better able to afford the tuition can pay tuition for a particular child or contribute to schools serving low-income communities.

• At an Illinois Industry Appreciation Day in April 1989, Edwin E. Schulze, chairman of the Illinois Manufacturers Association and president of the Ceco Corporation, spoke of the commitment of business to improve public school education. He said:

> The legislature has numerous proposals on education in the hopper in Springfield, even including one proposing a voucher system. Choice, in our view, is the ultimate resolution of the education dilemma and is a system to which we feel we must go in the long term if schools are to provide the kinds of education and produce the kind of product that we require to be competitive in a world economy.
>
> The IMA is not alone in thinking this. Choice appears to be another concept whose time has come. . . . That's the case in Illinois, where our Superintendent of Education is charged with bringing forth an analysis of choice and his recommendations on that subject by year end. . . . we subscribe to the proposition that it should be studied and studied carefully, but this has to do with the details of implementation and not with fundamental decisions. Variations of choice, voucher, magnet school, or something in between, are flourishing in communities throughout the country. . . . It is not just a concept that works in theory--it works in practice.

• Writing in A Heartland Perspective article (9/29/87), Herbert J. Walberg, research professor of education at the University of Illinois at Chicago wrote:

> Competition--made possible by any number of methods, including voucher plans, tuition tax credits, and corporate support of independent schools--can lead to an improvement in the public school system.

• Three Chicago Tribune columnists have expressed their carefully considered support for some sort of voucher system for children of poor parents. In his column, "More Power to Parents," (8/2/87) Clarence Page wrote:

> Why should the benefits of a private school education be reserved only for the rich? Why should poor parents not be allowed to take some of the same money that now subsidizes academic failure for their children and give it to someone. . . who can help steer the little ones toward success. . . . The more I hear about the voucher idea, the better I like it. If the privilege of choice were extended to poor parents by way of vouchers, many would begin to shop around for the best school, forcing the schools to compete with each other. . . . The current public school monopoly is just another example of how we take away from poor people opportunities to make their own choices and help themselves escape from poverty.

• In a 8/17/87 column, "Education vouchers start to make sense," William Raspberry, who once saw tuition tax credits and educational vouchers as a threat to public schools, wrote:

> Supporters of education vouchers, convinced that choice and competition are the keys to education reform, will love what Norman Macrae has to say on the subject. Teachers' unions and other opponents of vouchers, who see the ideas as elitist and destructive, will deplore it.
>
> Voucher agnostics (and I include myself) might find the proposal not only answers most doubts but also makes sense on issues they never thought about. Although his piece in the London Economist last September is about British schools, Macrae knows a good deal about America's public education problem and more than most Americans about the best of the voucher experiments. His conclusion is that what public education needs is: Vouchers-plus.

• In his Chicago Tribune column, "Here's who would gain from greater educational choice," (6/1/89), Stephen Chapman wrote:

> In the view of their critics, educational vouchers and tax credits are a sop to the rich, an unneeded subsidy to people who spurn our egalitarian public school system for elite college prep institutions and lily-white religious academies. We're told that giving parents a greater capacity to choose among schools would hurt those students most in need and consign the children of the inner city to second-class education.
>
> Anyone who wants to find out who would really benefit from greater educational choice should visit Providence-St. Mel School. Here is a school that looks destined for failure. It's located in the heart of the city's West Side, in a neighborhood ravaged by crime and poverty. Nearly a third of its students are poor; 80 percent come from families with an income of less that $15,000 a year. Though most kids in the area never finish high school, Providence-St. Mel aims at sending students off to college.
>
> Its $1,900-a-year tuition, daunting to most families in the neighborhood, covers about half its costs. . . . That's where a system of choice--involving vouchers or tax credits, or open enrollment policies among public schools--can help. . . . A system of choice wouldn't indiscriminately threaten public schools, many of which are outstanding. It would only endanger the bad ones, a development that ought to be heartily welcomed.

VIII. Multiplying Parental Options in Chicago

In Chicago for the 1990's educational choice will continue to be an all-important issue for (1) parents who wish to continue sending their youngsters to the city's public schools but prefer another public school; (2) parents who have enrolled a child in a public school but who want the option, if they so decide, to send that child to a private school; and (3) parents who, at great personal sacrifice, now send their children to private elementary or secondary schools whose futures are, in many cases, in jeopardy.

Some parents possess the financial ability to send their children to the school of their choice. Many others are handicapped by poverty when they want to enroll their youngsters in another school. The overall situation with regard to parental choice can be described as follows:

(1) Parental choice within the Chicago public school system: At the secondary level, parental choice has been a well established practice for decades. Every day thousands of students walk or take public transportation to the vocational or technical high school of their choice. There is, for example, the highly popular Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences. In more recent decades, as a result of programs for racial desegregation, many youngsters were enrolled at a school other than the one to which they were originally assigned.

During the last decade, parental choice has been extended even further.

A growing number of parents unhappy with the public elementary school to which their children were assigned have demanded and succeeded in enrolling their children in another public school of their choice. Each year the leadership of the Chicago Public Schools has offered more parents an option in order to hold their children in the system. That is why there is now an "Options for Knowledge" program. Public school officials have been busy renaming and converting more than a hundred existing schools into magnet schools, classical schools, language academies, gifted centers, community academies, career academies, prep schools, scholastic academies, schools with magnet programs, and the like. Each year, these refashioned schools increase in number and popularity and are promoted energetically in local communities--even through paid newspaper advertising. One such advertiser is the new South Loop Elementary School. In a two-column newspaper ad, the school did not describe itself as a neighborhood school but as:

> A local school with a magnet program in the Fine Arts. Options for Knowledge applications are accepted from all students residing in Chicago. An innovative and challenging curriculum, a highly qualified, specially selected staff, and a disciplined student body housed in a new superior facility in the South Loop .... Community resources will be used to enrich the total educational program.

As a result of parental choice, most magnet schools have long waiting lists. The competition, for example, for seats in the magnet schools on the near north side of Chicago is frenzied. In 1988, there were 15,000 applications for 1,000 elementary school vacancies. In an article in Chicago magazine (December 1988), Marj Halperin, then a Chicago-based reporter for National Public Radio, described some of the ingenious ways parents use to enroll their children in one of these schools:

> Ordinary citizens, too, get their children into Chicago's magnet schools: Some go through the official lottery system, but others improve their odds by applying personal clout, by inventing non-existent siblings and minority ancestors for their kids, or by mortgaging their souls to the

> PTA. Magnet hunting has turned into the great middle-class trauma. . . as. . . parents around the city gather to swap theories, network, bewail their fate, and to listen once again to the tales of parents who beat the system. Including me.

Currently, as a result of this rapid and recent expansion of parental choice, more than 20,000 pupils, kinderg through high school, are being transported voluntarily in Chicago Board of Education busses to various Chi public schools. In addition, tens of thousands of other youngsters walk or ride the CTA to schools picked by parents in place of the local neighborhood school.

With or without the appproval of the State of Illinois, the Chicago Public Schools have taken dramatic strid maximizing school options for parents dissatisfied with the school to which their child was originally assigned.

(2) Parents of public school students who want more and better options but cannot get them: Mobile Chi families often exercise their right to choose--by moving to a suburb where they enroll their youngsters in some school. In the past, thousands of white families have taken this step. In more recent decades a large and growing number of upwardly mobile black families has migrated to the suburbs for the same reason. Today, Asian and Hispanic families also head for the suburbs in search of an educational alternative. During this five-de exodus, only the presence of private schools situated in Chicago, especially Lutheran, Catholic and indepen schools and the proliferation of magnet public schools have anchored thousands of black and white parents and children in Chicago.

Among these parents are the Chicago public school teachers who live in the city. They are twice as likely to their own children to private schools as are all other Chicago parents. Thirty-eight percent of teachers who wo for the Chicago Board of Education and lived in the city, according to The Chicago Reporter (5/84), sent children to private schools. Another eighteen percent of these teachers had children in both private and p schools. Forty-six percent of all children of these teachers attend private schools.

Many families living in Chicago are not so mobile. Some are desperate enough to enroll their chil surreptitiously in suburban public schools, by utilizing the suburban address of a friend, baby-sitter or relative some other means, such as laying away enough money to rent a suburban apartment for one month--hopi establish legal residency. Public school officials in Markham, Maywood, Kankakee, Evanston, Niles, Lincolnw Oak Park and elsewhere have tracked down students who were legally Chicago residents. One suburb even hi private detective to identify pupils who might live in Chicago. In the 1989-90, school year 32 pupils, most of from Chicago, were removed from classrooms in Oak Park elementary schools for non-residency.

Unless a scholarship or some other aid is available, the majority of parents with youngsters in Chicago p schools are too impoverished to elect a private school. For such parents, school choice is a will-o'-the-wisp.

(3) Parents with children in private schools: Most parents who educate their children in private schools de regard that choice simply as an alternative to public education. Their choice carries a positive motive. Refle the U.S. commitment to pluralism, many parents desire a religious education for their children. Some parents a school where they can see that personal discipline and character development are top priorities. Both grou parents want their children attending a school which will transmit and support moral and social values importa them. Other parents see the local private school, for themselves and their children, as the first step to escape po or the miserable living conditions of a giant, high-rise public housing project. Still other parents prefer one sch innovative curriculum or another's tradition as a college prep school. By their choice of either a private or p school, parents take advantage of the nation's allegiance to educational pluralism.

Most private schools lead a precarious existence. At least once a year, reports about closing a Catholic inner school make newspaper headlines or the televison news shows. Only rarely can private schools charge en tuition to pay full operating costs. They rely on extensive fund-raising, low overhead, faithful volunteers, sc budgets far lower than those in tax-supported institutions, active school boards, school loyalty, parents willi

scrimp and save, willing hands to paint, clean and help with secretarial chores, teachers with salaries below the prevailing wage, and/or subsidies from religious bodies. They are also able to keep costs down because they are not encumbered by an expensive and extensive bureaucracy downtown.

Despite institutional fragility and annual budget crises, these private schools not only survive, but occasionally a new one opens. Parents have demonstrated their willingness to walk that extra mile so that a child can go to the school of their choice. That is why more than 125,000 youngsters (K to 12) are currently receiving an education in private schools situated in Chicago. Chicago has a higher percentage of its children enrolled in private schools than any other large city in the country. The sponsors of these day schools display great variety: Lutheran, Independent, Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist, Islamic/Muslim, Greek Orthodox, Christian, Montessori, Episcopalian, Jewish, alternative non-profit, proprietary, special education, and others.

IX. Findings and Recommendations

Findings

There is a widening gap between public institutions and people. Confidence in urban bureaucracies, such as public housing authorities or school systems, has never been lower. Distrust and cynicism rule. Citizens are increasingly troubled that their governmental institutions are primarily concerned with defending bureaucratic inertia, in maintaining existing "perks" and practices, in manipulating public opinion through "newspeak" and in furthering self-deception by administrators who have a self-interest. Enrollment in the Chicago Public Schools continues to decline. Since 1971 the number of students dropped by 29 percent, from 574,000 to 410,000. Not all of this decrease can be attributed to falling birth rates, family migration to the suburbs, smaller family size or an aging citizenry. Each year more public school parents are taking their children to other school systems.

How do citizens of Chicago frame and implement a public policy or install a new municipal agenda, when the local government and its political entities are themselves part of the problem? The situation with regard to children of school age is serious. For the first time in the history of urban America we may inherit a generation of young adults who will achieve less, educationally and economically, than their parents. The Mayor's Youth Development Coordinating Committee estimated that in Chicago in 1987:

- More than half the children in poverty were growing up in single-parent, female-headed families.
- 75,000 youth looking for work remained unemployed.
- More than 50,000 young people left school before graduating.
- 45,000 juveniles were arrested by Chicago police.
- 60,000 youth had an alcohol or drug problem.
- And 15,000 teenagers became pregnant; births among girls ten to 14 years old increased.

These are dismal statistics. They reflect civic failure to challenge and reform municipal institutions and urban policies. While the Chicago Public Schools cannot alone be blamed for these disastrous consequences, a radical reform of these schools, however, is a good place to begin.

Recommendations

Accordingly, the educational agenda of the City Club of Chicago has a double objective: (1) to improve the education being provided to the city's half million children of school age; and (2) to empower parents so that they can, in fact, choose the school, public or private, which will best serve the special needs of their children. To achieve the twin objectives, three conditions will have to be met:

- Parents who desire to send their children to a public school only and who are displeased with the school to which their child has been assigned will be able to select another public school which will better respond, they are convinced, to their child's unique talents and interests.
- Parents who elect to send their children to a private school will not be put at a disadvantage because of poverty.

In other words, poor families will be able to do for their children what wealthy parents now do: pick the best school for their youngsters.

• Parents who want the option of sending their child to the public or private school which best meets their child's educational needs will not only have a choice of public schools but will not be deterred from a private school because of inadequate family income.

For the sake of educational excellence and equity in the State of Illinois, the City Club recommends:

• That educational choice be expanded throughout the Chicago Public Schools.

• That the current state system of funding be replaced by a system of educational vouchers paid directly to Illinois parents whose dependents are eligible for enrollment in the state's primary and secondary schools. The voucher goes to the parents directly, not to the public or private school. The parents are then free to use the voucher to enroll their children in the school of their choice.

The Illinois General Assembly would, at the earliest possible date, place all monies currently earmarked for the support of primary and secondary education into a fund dedicated to support such a voucher payment system. The voucher payments from this fund would be of a reasonable nature so that parents will have a genuine opportunity to send their children to the school of their choice, whether private or public. Such a comprehensive plan for genuine educational choice would be established in all school districts throughout the state.

The Illinois State Board of Education would be utilized to supervise this program and to ensure that each primary and secondary school seeking to qualify met certain basic educational criteria. The vouchers would be used only in schools that meet established educational standards for curriculum, physical facilities, faculty qualifications and racial integration.

The City Club is convinced that the provision of educational vouchers will enable parents to choose the school that will best provide the educational program they desire for their children. A voucher system would cause schools, both public and private, to compete for students on the basis of the individual school's ability to convince parents and students that it would provide the optimum in educational opportunities. Thus, parents would be empowered in their relations with schools.

The City Club is also persuaded that an educational voucher system would accelerate public school reform by compelling such schools voluntarily to take the steps necessary to attract parental interest and student enrollment. The voucher system would be the catalyst that would eventually overcome bureaucratic resistance to school reform. Parental choice will assure meaningful school reform in the 1990s and its continuation by the next generation of empowered parents.

The principal beneficiaries of the voucher system would be families in the inner city, whether in Chicago, Rockford, Waukegan, East St. Louis, Peoria or elsewhere. These families are not only those who are on public aid or live in public housing projects but also the working poor. Indigenous schools where students learn and advance educationally would remain open. Furthermore, the family which now moves to the suburbs primarily for their schools, but which would prefer to stay in the city, would be more likely to find a good public school in Chicago itself. The intolerable discrimination which now prevails against children from families of low and moderate incomes would come to an end.

At an open forum (6/22/89) sponsored by the Chicago Youth Centers on public school reform in Chicago, Coretta McFerren, a parent with children in public schools and coordinator of the poverty task force of the Peoples Coalition for Educational Reform, put the parental choice issue into its proper inner-city perspective: "We just don't have the money to send our children to private schools."

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